

exhortation to do good. Suppose that someone should come to you on the street and say, "I have some good news for you." You might answer, "Good! What is it?" How silly it would be for him to reply, "Keep the commandments." "Keep the commandments" is not good news! It is merely an exhortation to do what we know we ought to do. The good news is that Jesus died in order that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish but have eternal life. This message was pushed to the background in the early part of the twentieth century and there were substituted all kinds of ways of buying one's way into heaven or earning it by works, just as it had been done in the sixteenth century. It was necessary that the Reformers bring to the fore the great central teaching of the Bible about salvation by faith. The same thing is necessary now. It lies at the heart of both Reformations.

A third important feature of the events that led to the Reformation of the sixteenth century was the development of dictatorship or authoritarianism in the church of God. This had to be broken by a Reformation. When any man assumes the right to give orders ~~in~~ apart from the Word of God, there is danger. This came into striking relief at many points in the experiences of Martin Luther. In one instance, he was called to Augsburg to discuss his view on indulgences with Cardinal Cajetan. Cardinal Cajetan was a great scholar, but his purpose in meeting Luther was simply to demand submission. He refused to enter into any discussion, simply saying, "Submit to the church; submit your wisdom to the wisdom of your superiors." Cajetan was standing for a wrong principle. In opposition to this wrong principle, a great Reformation became necessary. We are in a similar situation today. Church leaders demanded that the members of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions resign and give their whole support to the official organizations. Dr. Machen replied, "We must obey God rather than men." Similar situations arose in other denominations. Ecclesiastical tyranny has been trying to weave a web of tight organizational control around the people of God. The World Council of Churches represents a step toward the creation of a dictatorial super-church. Against all such movements true Christians must take an uncompromising stand.

When we contrast the strong praise that Jesus gave to Peter in Matt. 16:18 with the harsh rebuke that He gave him only five verses later, where He even called him Satan, we see how contrary it is to the whole idea of the passage to think that Peter was given any authoritarian or dictatorial control over the church of God. The authority was to be in Jesus' teaching, not in any human individual. Human individuals must exert authority in carrying out the commandments of God, but this authority must always be subject to being corrected by the Word of God, and they must always be subject to removal whenever they seriously err, as Peter did on the occasion described in Matthew 16.